We Are All Always So Close to Not Existing at All
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We Are All Always So Close to Not Existing at All

by YourFavouriteCorvid (orphan_account)

Summary

“Why’re you humouring me?”

There was more silence then, and he was forced to confront the ache of his muscles, and the crackle in his lungs that wasn’t there hours before. The world around him looked more like a smear than a room, he thought. “Sorry. I—just… Sorry.” Soap flexed his hand, trying to work out a cramp that was beginning to bother him. He got a grunt of acknowledgement, and then Ghost was back on his bed, all the way. Reading his book again. His eyes scanned the pages slowly, like he was all too aware of how John’s eyes were stuck on him. After a few minutes of the constant cramping, the lieutenant turned his attention from the book back to him. His gaze weighed a thousand kilos.

“You look like shit.”

“Observant,” he bit back. “I feel like shit.”

Soap touched something he shouldn't have, and experiences the consequences. In the luckiest break of his life, he isn't alone when the ache sets in.

Notes

I am woefully familiar with writing fanfiction, though every one I write gets deleted within two years. If you like this one, I suggest saving it for later via copying it to docs or something. If this inspires you and you want to write smth else would you pretty please link me to it because i like reading *bats enormous eyelashes at you*

So like real talk I wrote this because I got outrageously sick at the beginning of my winter break and it inspired me to inflict the horrors on my Guys. While I do appreciate and respect the good

ol' whump out there, you gotta admit sometimes the bullet wounds get a little tired—so I decided with my very limited research I would do something I'd never really touched before (because I never had a scenario for it).

OH DISCLAIMER IM NOT ACTUALLY BRITISH I JUST TYPE LIKE THIS FOR SOME REASON. DO NOT EXPECT ACCURATE ACCENTS OUT OF ME.

If you like my stuff hit me up on roblox because i am definitely not on tumblr and twitter under the same name i am on here my roblox is YourFavouriteCorvid, but it says YouHaveNoCaulk :)

Chapter 1

In retrospect, he really should have caught on when he fell asleep with his boots on. The week's work had just been so exhausting that the mere thought of running through his nightly routine had seemed impossible at the time; deadly, even. Like if he dared to lift his legs one more time he'd simply fall over and not get up for months. No mission had ever taken him out like that, not even some of the worse ones. So when Soap woke up with a head full of cotton and limbs full of lead, he felt like he was more than a little foolish for not recognising the warning signs. Somehow feeling more tired than he had before crashing, he scrabbled to put his arms beneath himself and shift onto his side, a thin line of saliva solidified in his stubble.

Properly disconcerted and feeling pain deep in his abdomen from the sudden movement, he scrubbed the debris from his face with his free fingertips and stared into the darkness of the room, right at the wall. From somewhere behind him he heard movement, bed covers shifting with a purpose. Soap inhaled sharply, a dizzy wave rolling over him while he moved to a sitting position—and he tried to consider who he was rooming with. Hazy details floated around his head, not quite solidifying enough for him to actually make a deduction. The amount of thinking he was doing made his head pound, so he let out a sharp groan and lowered himself back down onto his side.

"What the hell are you doing awake so early?" A dark voice asked. John coughed a weak laugh, moving his arm beneath his ear to cushion his strangely delicate skull with his own bicep.

"Could ask ye the same thing. On that note, what time is it?"

There was a grunt, then the beep of a watch. "0400."

"Really?" He asked, a little incredulous. He could remember now that they'd gotten back late, filing into their temporary lodgings at just about midnight. It wasn't unusual for him to sleep lightly, and the other person in the room (Ghost, he'd decided) seemed to function on the bare minimum anyways—but it did seem a bit unrealistic for himself to wake up so soon with the level of tiredness seeping into his very soul. Thinking of this he found himself with his eyes closed, breathing weakly through slightly parted lips to avoid a nose whistle. From his limited perception he could hear pages turning, then the thud of a book closing dramatically. "Never answered me," He droned.

“Why *are* you up, Lt?” The answer was obvious enough, but even in his limited state he felt a little bit like antagonising his superior.

“You know why.” Soap snorted. It was exactly the answer he should have expected, given how high the brick wall between Ghost and the rest of the world seemed to be.

“I do,” John admitted. “Disnae mean I cannae ask aboot it.” Not one of the most intelligent lines of reasoning, or intelligible sentences. He wasn’t honoured with a response, but instead felt a heated stare on his back, likely full of borderline playful confusion and disdain. Soap sighed, head sinking further into his arm.

“Are you feeling alright, Johnny?”

“...You want the truth? *Fuck* no.”

He felt a little like complaining, the unfairness of his predicament catching up to him. He’d done good work and as a reward he received some sort of bug. He supposed that’s what he got for his little stunt with the improvised smoke bomb. It’d provided decent enough cover to gain advantage against the enemy, but it wasn’t in the plan and he’d neglected to mention it to his team. Naturally, everyone had adapted, but the mistake was his own. Probably not big enough to invoke divine punishment, though. He blew out a dissatisfied puff of air, head swimming. He felt just a little bit too hot and just a little bit too cold all at once. His very skin hurt, for some reason. With a sigh from across the room, he heard that book open back up. Slowly it dawned on him that there wasn’t any light source in the room (to his knowledge), and that it wouldn’t make sense to read in the dark.

“You eat a lot of carrots, Lt?” He asked, receiving nothing but an

unaffected sigh from behind. “Since yer apparently able tae read in the dark and all.” The words came out as more of a murmur at the end, but he was sure his point got across.

Ghost wasted no time in his reply. “I have a clip light.”

Oh, that’d explain it. John pushed himself to lay flat on his back, and the movement brought him a searing pain deep within his gut. It didn’t make much sense to him; he’d been fine some hours ago and now he was struggling with the very act of laying down. With an ache Soap tried again to push himself into a more upright position, and found himself swaying. Irritation crawled through his very being. The longer he was awake, the worse it seemed to get.

His ears were ringing, and he felt an ebbing cramp in his arms, pain radiating out to his chest and down his back. He grit his teeth and opened his eyes to find it was exactly as dark as he’d left it, save for a spot of light off to his right. *Ghost.* He became aware that his teeth were vibrating, and slowly his own voice seeped into his hearing. It was a low drone of effort he didn’t even know he was emitting. “Johnny?” The lieutenant started. “What the fuck are you doing?”

Suddenly breathless, he swallowed a glob of spit. He gritted out, strained— “I… *Hurt* , Lt.”

“Bloody Christ. Were you hit out there?”

Soap shook his head. “No. Someth’n else.” Sweat beaded on his forehead, and that pain tearing through each muscle and ligament spiked. His stomach ached. “Fffuck,” he growled. For a moment he thought the eyes on him might be concerned, but when he turned to look and his vision blurred he found only a pinched brow beneath a balaclava. “Get sick, then?” He watched inattentively as the fabric moved over Ghost’s lips. The small light made it look like it was shimmering. He felt like there was a thick film over every sound in the room—he was sure the other man had said something else then, moving suddenly to turn on a lamp.

Immediately the room was flooded with light, and his eyes burned so intensely he threw himself forward to get off his arms and scrub at them. “Fuck! Warn a guy, you bleedin’ numpty.” His ears tuned in suddenly, allowing him to hear Ghost’s disgruntled reply.

“I did. Your fault for not listening.” He pressed into his eyes until he

saw star-like patterns behind them, then he dragged his fingers down his face and took his best breath to calm down.

“Yer makin’ me think ye don’t like me anymore, Simon.”

“And what if I don’t?”

“You’ll just be breakin’ my heart.”

He curled over his knees, hanging loosely as he tried to get his eyes to adjust to the abrupt light, but it wasn’t happening as fast as he’d liked. A sigh left his body and he turned his head, straining to look up at the man with the balaclava. “But ye did just admit ye liked me at *some* point. I’ll take that.” Seemingly incredulous, Ghost shook his head and pushed himself to a sitting position on the side of his own bed. Soap finally sat up, though his eyes hurt so badly they began to tear up—and he turned his full attention to the man. “What’re you readin’?” He asked, pressing the heel of his hand into his eye once more. It only hurt worse.

Ghost turned over the book in his hand. It had a beige cover, and there was a sort of squiggle on it. “I’m not even sure.”

“Tell me aboot it.”

“Mmh. This… Boy. He finds his neighbour’s dog skewered out in the road.”

“Oowf. Were you there to do it?”

“Funny.”

“Is that it, then? Just the dog?”

“I just started.”

Soap grumbled with dissatisfaction and let his hand fall, and Ghost seemed to take pity on him. “Last one I read was Animal Farm.”

“Jesus. Tha’ one a re-read?” He remembered that one, and how it’d been crammed down his throat as a classic, and too good to pass up. In all honesty, he thought it was a little pretentious in the way it presented itself; but he supposed that could be a symptom of him not reading too many “real books” in general.

Ghost nodded, as he'd expected. "I wanted to see if it still held up." Soap squinted at the candour there, finding it a bit strange how freely this information was being given. His motivations were usually kept a secret, like he wanted as little people to know he was human as possible. He remained in silence for a moment, thinking through his headache that he might have seen the man squirm a little under his gaze.

"Why're you humouring me?"

There was more silence then, and he was forced to confront the ache of his muscles, and the crackle in his lungs that wasn't there hours before. The world around him looked more like a smear than a room, he thought. "Sorry. I—just… Sorry." Soap flexed his hand, trying to work out a cramp that was beginning to bother him. He got a grunt of acknowledgement, and then Ghost was back on his bed, all the way. Reading his book again. His eyes scanned the pages slowly, like he was all too aware of how John's eyes were stuck on him. After a few minutes of the constant cramping, the lieutenant turned his attention from the book back to him. His gaze weighed a thousand kilos.

"You look like shit."

"Observant," he bit back. "I feel like shit." His words formed a sloping hill, running into each other. He found himself picturing green grass on steppes he'd never seen before, far away from his present situation. It was a nice fantasy, but he has pressing issues. "Must've caught something." He placed his forehead in his hand, massaging at the sides of his face. He felt runny, like the burning in his body was actually capsaicin, and his eyes leaked tears and his nose snot to make up for the heat. Now there was some sort of concern in the room, heavy in the air like lead.

Lead…

There was something he was missing, his brain skimming over events from the last two or three days, considerable gaps in his memory. He heard a voice in the air, questioning *something* of him, but a dizzy nausea forced him to his feet, where he tried to conceal the pain he felt deep in his chest and through his bones. He moved lethargically, bracing himself on the wall as he made his way to the restroom attached to the front of the room. Focused only on the sound of his

own breathing now, he felt that he was failing to notice something glaringly obvious, like maybe the fact that Ghost had gotten up and now was silently behind him, like he was afraid Soap would fall. Maybe he would. He didn't feel all that steady. Soap huffed a laugh, "You comin' in with me?" When the door fell open the brightness only compounded, tearing at his eyes with a vengeance. "Fuck!"

He stumbled back just to fall into a sturdy body, hands coming up to hold steady his now faltering arms. The Brit made a noise he didn't quite know how to categorise, and he was just… pushed forward. Soap felt a bit too heavy for that, almost surprised that Ghost could move him from his spot, but he was a strong guy. Stronger than most. "Just calm down, Sergeant." It was the first real thing he'd heard from the man in about a minute, and it was more reassuring than anything he'd ever felt in his life. Eyes still shut very tightly, he allowed himself to be manipulated. Trust for his lieutenant was stronger than his fear of pain. He was guided to the toilet, and then those strong hands left his skin, the cooling sensation now gone. Embarrassingly, he whimpered in protest.

"I turned the lights off." Soap could tell this was a request to stop covering his eyes like a child, so he gave himself a breath and removed his hands from his face, met with blissful darkness. Sweat dripped off his forehead. Relief, he was sure. "Thank you."

"Don't thank me yet."

He could have sworn he imagined that. It felt too much like an omen. Electricity seemed to flood the back of his mouth, coating his tongue with saliva; he moved off the edge of the toilet and fumbled with the lid just to flood the bowl with the contents of his stomach. The acrid taste of bile stung at his lips, leaving him spitting into the water with a shudder. For a few moments he thought that was it, but evidently this sudden onset of sickness had other plans for him, and he retched again. Hunched over and on his knees he curled his fingers into his thigh, a buzzing sensation made from the contact. Between gags, he heard water running behind him, and then there was a cool, wet face towel on the back of his neck. The hand pressing it there was heavy; awkward. Ghost helped him like he didn't know what he was doing.

Water trickled down his shoulders and the coolness only worsened his nerves. While he appreciated the thought, it wasn't right, it felt suffocating. His words of protest fell out as a horrid mumble. "Geddit off." The weight was lifted from his skin and he sagged to one side,

hugging the bowl while he reached up to flush away the evidence of his sudden onset of illness. “Fuck,” he breathed. It took him a great deal of effort to lift his eyes from the floor, up to the tense lieutenant. For some reason he’d been searching for an explanation, or justification—anything to ease his beating heart. He’d been in this position before. Semi-recently, actually.

Inside the enemy facility they’d been attacked from all sides. Even as prepared as they were it was a miracle everyone made it out, just by virtue of how many enemies there were. At some point he’d ended up on the floor, just as he had here, fighting from a compromised position. He hadn’t had any issues then, no; he was perfectly capable on his own, even at a disadvantage. But afterwards he’d been out of sorts. Some of the soldiers they’d had to gun down were borderline *kids*. They looked younger than he was when he joined up. Russia was up to some serious shit, and it had affected Soap greatly. But where he’d received a hand to pull him up and back into the game before, he was now met with a stare.

‘-nny, are you hearing me?”

He shook his head. “Sorry, sir. What?” Ghost moved quickly enough for his arm to blur, hand resting on his head. John couldn’t help but feel like he’d let the man down somehow, even though he didn’t know what was asked of him.

“I asked if you even know what day it is.”

Soap scoffed, letting his head roll to the side. “It’s Thursday.”

“Date, sergeant.” He had a laugh at that, as it wasn’t too often he got the man to trip over his own words. It wasn’t intentional sarcasm, but he still felt that somehow he’d gotten one up on his superior. “Well?” That accent was getting a little grating now, and Soap pursed his lips and drew his brows together with how he was being treated. His head was pounding and he felt like he was on fire still, couldn’t they focus on that instead? He sniffled, and leaned back against the wall, weakly tossing up a hand in dismissive fashion.

“Fuck off.” He couldn’t think properly like this, not when every breath seemed to burn. There was a pit in his stomach as he tried to reconcile with the fact that this wasn’t some cold. It was intense, and worrying.

“One more chance. Give me the date.”

Right. It was supposed to be the day they'd actually get home, but an unfortunate lack of transportation kept them in a foreign country. His knee locked up in front of him, and he gave a sustained groan, throwing his head back. "April." He gritted out, perspiration gathering on his neck.

"Not enough."

"The fuckin'... Fourth."

"Wrong."

"Sixth? One o' those."

"You don't get guesses. Stay put."

And then the only presence he had to hold onto was gone, disappeared into another room. His absence felt like a hole in the room, drawing the air out of his chest. He wasn't sure how long it was before he was hauling himself back up and retching into the toilet again. Him not immediately knowing the damned date didn't mean he was having a stroke. It seemed like a gross overreaction to leave him to go do… Whatever he was doing. Soap found himself dry heaving before long, and he finally fell away to the side after he lost the energy to hold himself up. In the grandest display of "why me" he could manage, he tried to recall anything that could possibly cause him to have such an adverse reaction. The facility they'd been in wasn't exactly radioactive, and it wasn't too cold. He'd kept clear of anything that could hurt him too horribly, and to his (admittedly fuzzy) recollection, he hadn't drunk anything foul.

But something had to have happened. It wasn't every day you got the flu within a few hours.

"Johnny."

His thoughts were interrupted with a fizzle, and he realised he was staring at nothing, breathing laboriously from his place on the floor. Ghost had appeared in the doorway like a spectre, and had a phone in his hand. "He's still up," Ghost spoke into the receiver. He heard another voice over the line, one he was sure he recognised even though it sounded tinny—and his lieutenant nodded. "Responsive,

sir." As if set out to prove him wrong, John lost the ability to hold his head up straight, skull thunking quietly against the wall. Much to his chagrin, his limbs followed suit, weakness drilling through them and keeping him pinned to the floor. If he somehow didn't think it before he knew it now; something was seriously wrong. An aura like a second skin clung to him, reminding him just *how* wrong it was.

Ghost seemed to catch onto this too, because without any preamble there were thickly gloved hands on his face, burning his tender skin and pulling at his eyelids. He swallowed, spit choking out his protest —and he moved his hand up to swat the larger man's away. Instead clammy fingers hooked onto his wrist and stayed there, a faint tremor lying within them. His tongue felt thick in his mouth, too heavy to move. He tried anyway.

"Whossat?" He meant over the phone, but he honestly wasn't sure if that would get across. He was in a feverish state of mind, sweat soaking through his clothes and making him uncomfortable. He couldn't think properly even if he made a herculean effort.

"Help," came the response. Quick and to the point. The fingers moved from his eye and he blinked sluggishly, a frown pulling at his lips. Somehow that convinced the man to elaborate. "Price, now shut up."

More noise from the phone.

"Keep talking."

Mixed signals. Soap didn't like those. He groaned, hardly listening as Ghost rattled something off in front of him—just looking at his silhouette in the dark. He moved with so much grace for being such a huge lad. Occasionally he'd disappear from view and John would feel an absence of warmth, of presence, and he'd feel a little sad at that, but every time Ghost returned. With the phone, or some object like a tissue. Once he failed to notice the passage of time, a gap in his perception took place; he woke up on the floor, limbs sprawled awkwardly on the tile, tongue feeling sore. After that he'd get reminded to breathe, like he needed to be told, and he thought that Simon sounded worried. He wasn't just being a hardass for the sake of it. Too bad he wasn't taking anything to heart.

"MacTavish, look at me. Look, sergeant!" He was slapped out of his stupor by the man with the chops himself. Captain Price. He didn't look too happy at first, but when Soap got his eyes to focus on his

nose of all things, tense relief seeped into his frame. “Good. Can you give me something coherent, son?” Captain Price’s hand was on the back of his neck, trying to support some of its weight. The captain looked so tired… He’d hate to have woken him up for something so silly. Since John didn’t really feel like having his ass handed to him, he tried to confirm with his leader that he really would be fine. Problem was, his words came out a mumble. So he tried again. *I’ll… Be… Okay.*

“Mmmmmmnn.”

He’d had more successful attempts at building rocket ships. The man’s facial hair shifted and his eyes narrowed, and Soap guessed it was due to a frown. Captain Price shouted off to the side to hurry up with something, but he didn’t catch what. It really had to be important for the man to get so red. Soap heard that he needed to be moved, though he didn’t catch where. Bitterly he thought that hopefully it was a bed with a humidifier next to it. Every moment it felt harder to get a good lungful of air.

Price’s visage swam into view. “Don’t move. We’ve got you.” Then his thigh stung with the feeling of an injection. He wondered what he did to deserve this, other than do a soldier’s duty and kill. Maybe that was all it took. He wasn’t fighting for the right reasons.

Or it had more to do with a memory bleeding into his sight. Toward the end of it all, when they were clearing up any stragglers, Soap had been stationed against a wall, awaiting a new order. *Check fire* had been… Someone’s last bark, and he hadn’t been about to let them down. So he’d kept in relatively the same place, peeking a corner every so often. That was when the trouble started. What he had thought to be a burst pipe at the moment had begun to leak, and he’d ended up the unlucky bastard standing right beneath it. Three tiny droplets had landed square on the shaved portion of his head before he finally moved, and when he did he’d looked up to see a tipped and dented metal container on top of a grated deck.

Drip.

Drip.

Drip.

It was obvious now, when he was dying on the floor, but at the

moment his mind had simply skimmed over the thing's existence, too hopped up on mission-induced adrenaline to take note. That was the cause. Whatever had landed on him was rotting him away, and he couldn't put the damned name to it. In the present his eyes widened, and though he was glued to the floor and every breath was an uphill battle—he somehow beat the odds and managed to shallowly hyperventilate. In front of him two faces danced, though one of them covered up, and he realised he was the last person to figure it out. He thought he heard Price tell someone to calm down. It could have been himself or it could have been the lieutenant, whose eyebrows were pinched and raised, creating a funny sort of slope.

Soap was sure he looked a sight on the floor, and he had it in him to be embarrassed for a moment. That he might be curled up on the ground, soaked in his own fluids and breathing his last breaths was a scandal to him, and were he lucid he'd comment about it. The good news was, he didn't seem to be deteriorating as fast, and the full-body numbness he hadn't noticed he was experiencing was now *being noticed*. Maybe even better than that, he heard a door open; awareness was halfway there, and there didn't seem to be any screaming. He could appreciate that, at least. Keeping calm under pressure. He was reminded of how much Ghost had been in his corner in the first few minutes, putting up with his complaints like a champ. Figuring out what was wrong much faster than he ever could. More presences popped up in the room. With any luck, trained to deal with his problem. Soap decided that before his fate was sealed he'd give showing his gratitude a try.

"Ghhh. Th'ye."

Ah, well. He gave it a shot.

Kind of an A/N

Heya fellas. You've asked for it, so I'm delivering it!.....Very slowly.

There WILL be a continuation of this story, but with what I have written so far it would honestly do better as a standalone than a chapter, so I'm writing it up right now and telling you that there WILL be results! I prommy. Right now it's pretty slow going because of the premise of the second chapter, but it's really trippy and I really like it (when I'm not tearing my hair out trying to write it). So I just wanted it to be known: There WILL be a conclusion, it MIGHT TAKE FOREVER, but I AM WRITING IT! And I haven't just disappeared. That Graves fanfic you might have seen for a couple days before it disappeared is also back in the workshop, so if you enjoy my writing, that'll come eventually. Right now I'm prioritising the second installation of This Fuckin Thing first, though. ok? It really warms my heart that even 300 people have seen this story and gone "Wow, that sounds interesting /neu" and I'd like to thank everyone who's kudos'd, commented, and bookmarked. Cool community we have!

So TL;DR I'm writing a second chapter and publishing it separately and it might take a while but i still love you anyways

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!